

REMARKS

The examiner has restricted the claims into two groups:

Claims 1 – 11 (Group I), and

Claims 12 – 16 (Group II).

As discussed below, the applicants' attorney respectfully traverses the restriction requirement on all of the currently pending claims 1 – 16 (Groups I and II) because the examiner can search and examine the claims in each of the groups without serious burden. Although the applicants' attorney traverses the restriction requirement as discussed below, claims 1 – 11 (Group I) are provisionally elected for prosecution if the examiner does not withdraw the restriction requirement.

According to MPEP §803, if the examiner can search and examine the application without serious burden, then he/she must examine the application on the merits even though it includes claims to independent or distinct inventions. As discussed below, because claims 1 – 16 recite similar subject matter, the examiner can perform a single search and examination that will cover all of the claims. Consequently, the examiner can search and examine the currently pending claims 1 – 16 without serious burden, and therefore must examine these claims.

Because claims 1 and 8 each recite a housing having a storage compartment that includes a body and a lid, and claims 10 and 11 each recite a system that includes such a housing, and claims 12 and 16 each recite methods for storing an item in such a housing, the examiner can perform a single search for claims 1 – 16. Furthermore, because these claims recite related subject matter, examination of these claims will involve similar analyses. Therefore, it is only slightly more burdensome for the examiner to search and examine all of the claims 1 – 16 than it would be to search and examine all the provisionally elected claims 1 – 11.

Consequently, because there is no serious burden on the examiner to search and examine claims 1 – 16, the restriction is improper. Therefore, the examiner must withdraw the restriction on claims 1 – 16 and examine these claims.

CONCLUSION

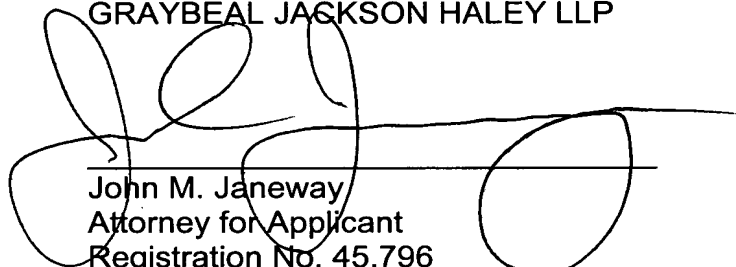
The applicants' attorney respectfully requests that the examiner withdraw the restriction and election of species requirements on claims 1 – 16 and examine these claims.

If the Examiner believes that a phone interview would be helpful, he is respectfully requested to contact the applicants' attorney, John M. Janeway, at (425) 455-5575.

DATED this 1st day of November 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

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